648, 665, 642, 433

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[For the economic and political position of Albania under Soviet control since the death of Stalin, see 85: Zinner, R1 Soviet Union, Category 116, Pp. 157B-163B.]

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•665 A new generation of political leaders now came forward, many of whom were to play an important part in this story. In the South, the Orthodox Bishop Fan Noli, with a group of returned emigrants from the United States, formed a party professing Radical principles. He met with some support, especially among the landless Orthodox peasantry, but his movement suffered from the difficulties of applying advanced Western political theories to tribal or feudal communities where the Ottoman tradition of government still prevailed. The Moslems of the South also formed a party, to which most of the Tosk beys adhered. Prominent among its leaders were Ali Klissura, Midhat Frasheri, and Mehdi Frasheri, who represented perhaps the most enlightened element among the Albanians, combining a Western education with practical experience of administration in the Ottoman civil service. Mehdi Frasheri indeed had been Governor of Jerusalem under the Turks, and was later to surprise his colleagues in the League of Nations Assembly by a speech on the Palestine Mandate such as they had scarcely expected from the Albanian delegate. In the North there were tribal factions rather than political parties. The leader of the Catholics was Jon Marko Joni, who had become Captain of the Mirdita in succession to Prenk Bib Doda and was for a time the protagonist of a Serbian inspired plan for the creation of an autonomous Mirdite Republic. Bairam Bey Tsuri and Tsena Bey Kryeziu, two hot-tempered guerilla leaders, contended for supremacy among the Moslem clans of the north-east, while Mustafa Kruya and Sufi Elezi
643 were paramount in Kruya and in Dibra. But the strongest man in the country, drawing his power, like Essad Pasha before him, from the fighting men of Mati and the rich landowners of Central Albania, was Ahmet Bey Zog.

643 Ahmet Zog was born in 1895 of a family of Mati Beys with
159 a long tradition of distinguished service to the Ottoman Empire. When he was but a boy his grandfather, Jemal Pasha, conspired with Marshal Rejeb Pasha to carve out an independent Albanian kingdom from the ruin of Turkish power in Europe. The Marshal was at the time in command of the Turkish armies in Tripoli and planned to sail to Albania with his best troops as soon as Jemal Pasha should raise the standard of revolt. But

1/ [After Paris Peace Conference, 1920 -- Analyst]

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sustained in the days when he had fought against Zog. Although illiterate, the man was no peasant, but delicately made and with all the grace of movement of a mountaineer. He spoke little, but with a charm of expression and gesture and a warmth of tone which overcame the impersonality of interpreted conversation. From the start he agreed to work whole-heartedly with Gani; and, despite their different views on the subject of the monarchy, the two became fast friends. Abas Kupi made his home with the Kryezius; and, in the intervals of their conspiracies, Said spent much of his time translating the newspapers to him and the broadcasts from Allied stations.

We had broadened our movement to the Right by including [665] Abas Kupi and the monarchist exiles; now, on Said's advice, we took in Mustafa Jinishi, a member of the Communist Party and a brilliant propagandist. Paris had been the main centre of the Albanian Communists, but, though we did not know it, the Germans had already deported most of their leaders back to Albania. There, the Fascist government let them remain at large, for at this time the Communist Parties throughout the world were still denouncing our struggle with Nazi Germany as an imperialist war. The influence of the Albanian Communists was reputed insignificant, but we were glad to have Mustafa Jinishi for his personal qualities and earnestly hoped that his willingness to work with us might be a sign of a change of heart in Moscow.

Our movement might now be justly termed a United Front of Albanian resistance to Italy. Indeed Abas Kupi, Gani Kryeziu, and Mustafa Jinishi represented, in so far as a people as profoundly anarchic as the Albanians could be said to have representatives at all, the chief factions among the *émigrés* and in Albania, which were prepared to fight for their country's freedom. These three men had been at daggers drawn until a few days before; now, thanks to British intervention and Said Kryeziu's patient diplomacy, they had come together to fight against their common enemy. The sole basis, however, of their alliance was the Italian occupation of their country, which barred them equally from all hope of power. They became great personal friends, but they would sometimes tell us that,

* [British Intelligence. Cf. cat. 11b, pp 25-28 -- Analyst]

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*669 the operations of the bands assumed the form of a general revolt.

At the end of 1941 there were several small groups of outlaws in the Albanian mountains, of which the most important were that of Abas Kupi in the Kruya region and that of the Communist leaders near Korcha. The winter was, as always among highlanders, a time of preparation; and, with the spring of 1942, there appeared among the Tosks a number of "Partisan" units which all belonged to the same organisation. Mystery still surrounds the beginnings of the Albanian Partisan movement. The original instructions, however, for its formation, and the detailed plans for its constitution, were apparently brought to the Albanian Communist leaders by two emissaries of Tito who went under the pseudonyms of Ali and Miladin. By the summer of 1943 close liaison had been established between the Albanian and Yugoslav Partisans, and it was observed that Yugoslav representatives often exerted a decisive influence on the counsels of the Albanians.

*669 665 The leaders of the Albanian Partisans did not admit that their movement was Communist, although their rank and file habitually styled themselves as such. They presented themselves instead as a coalition of men of goodwill, dedicated to freeing Albania from foreign domination, purging the country of Fascist elements, and creating conditions in which the people might freely elect a government of their own choosing. In practice, exclusive control of the movement was retained in the hands of a small committee, all of whom were Communists. This committee, besides directing policy, appointed the guerilla commanders, the political commissars, and the regional organisers. The former were most often, and the two latter invariably, Communists; while, in accordance with the best conspiratorial traditions, all three were kept under observation by Party members who held no official position at all. By these methods, seconded by the salutary liquidation of those who disobeyed or disagreed, the Partisan movement presently achieved a degree of discipline and cohesion of which few observers believed Albanians to be capable. At an early stage the Red Star badge

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and the clenched fist salute were introduced into their ceremonies; an ingenious propaganda disseminated the usual adulation of Russia and denigration of all non-Communist elements; and the political and military structure of the movement reproduced, even in certain minute details, the pattern common to all the Communist guerillas in the Balkans and apparently evolved by the Party from experience in China and Spain.

The principal persons on the committee were Seifullah Maleshova, Enver Hoja, Ymer Dyshnitsa, and Mustafa Jinishi. Seifullah was of an older generation than the others and had been a member of the Party for more than twenty years. A brilliant propagandist and talented writer, he was popularly known as " the Red Poet ", and was in charge of the propaganda section of the movement. Years of exile and conspiracy, however, had sapped his energies and, despite his seniority, he was not to be the leader. This post was reserved for Enver Hoja, a schoolmaster from Korcha, still in his early thirties and possessed of rare organising ability. Ymer Dyshnitsa was a pliable young doctor of great personal charm and considerable culture: he had studied in France and Belgium and was the diplomat of the movement. Mustafa Jinishi had already played a part in the United Front in Belgrade and, despite occasional lapses from Stalinist orthodoxy, was the most popular leader with the rank and file by virtue of his ready wit and daring personal exploits.

The Partisans were essentially a Tosk movement, and at first recruited their forces mainly from the youth of the towns and the landless peasants. Later, they sought to extend their influence north of the Shkumbi, but there they looked in vain for similar elements from whom they might draw their strength. Instead they found a pastoral people, scarcely touched by Western, or indeed any, education, and loyal to their hereditary chieftains. Under these conditions the Communist leaders rightly decided that, unless they could win the support of some at least of these Gheg chiefs, they could not hope to make any progress in the North at all.

The most important of the Gheg guerilla bands was that of Abas Kupi, but there were also two strong groups in the regions

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*669 of Peza and Martanesh. The first and stronger of these was led by Muslim Peza, the veteran Robin Hood of Albania, who had been ten years an outlaw, first against Zog and now against the Italians; the other by Baba Faya, a Bektashi abbot, whom the Italians had sought to arrest for his open denunciations of their rule. By appeals to their patriotism and promises of arms and gold, of which they stood in desperate need, Mustafa Jinishi persuaded these two veterans to join the Partisans. He then made his way north to confer with Abas Kupi, who readily agreed that they should make common cause against a common enemy.

*669 665 By gaining the support of these Gheg chiefs the Partisan movement acquired immense prestige throughout Albania, as well as a new respectability in the eyes of those who had hitherto been alarmed by the known Communist allegiance of its leaders. In September 1942, at a conference held at Peza, the several Partisan groups were for the first time formally embodied in a movement proclaimed under the name of *Levisiya Nacional Clirimtare* (National Liberation Movement), or L.N.C.,[1] as it will hereinafter be called. The leadership of the L.N.C. was vested in a Central Council of ten members, the most important of whom were the three Gheg chiefs, Abas Kupi, Muslim Peza, and Baba Faya, and the Communist leaders, Enver Hoja, Seifullah Maleshova, Mustafa Jinishi, and Ymer Dyshnitsa.

It seemed to many as if the Partisan movement had been broadened by the inclusion of non-Communists among its leaders. The real effect of the merger, however, was to enable the Communists to extend their influence among the Ghegs, without in any way limiting their full control over the Partisan movement among the Tosks. The three Gheg chiefs derived their strength from local influence; and had therefore to spend most of their time in their own districts, preserving the balance of power between the clans and holding together guerilla forces which, in their absence, would soon have dispersed. As a result they could seldom meet to confer and could not hope to attend

[1] The L.N.C. was later more often known as F.N.C. (National Liberation Front). For the sake of convenience, however, I have preferred to retain the earlier description throughout.

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the day-to-day deliberations of their fellow members of the Central Council. The real control of the movement was thus left in the hands of the Communists, whose authority sprang solely from their party and whose mobility was untrammelled by territorial responsibilities. The Communists, moreover, soon gained control of the forces of Muslim Peza and Baba Faya. These two were guerilla leaders of the old school, brave in battle and cunning enough in business, but ignorant, lazy, and hard-drinking. Baba Faya indeed was an adventurer of purely mercenary talent, and Muslim, though a man of parts, was blinded by a fatal devotion to Mustafa Ilnishi. They were thus easily persuaded to delegate more and more of their work, and with it of their power, to the political commissars attached to them by the Central Council. Abas Kupi alone preserved his independence. He refused to admit political commissars among his forces and treated those who were sent to him as no more than the Council's liaison officers. He attended personally to every detail of the organisation of his bands; and such was his distrust of human intentions in general, and those of the Communist Party in particular, that he deliberately sacrificed military efficiency rather than delegate his authority to men whose disloyalty or imprudence might permit the infiltration of Communist influence among his troops. He was careful, however, to avoid giving offence to his Communist colleagues; and they for their part were content to let him be a law unto himself so long as they could gain prestige for their movement and mask their own political affiliations by the use of his name.

Meanwhile the conservative elements among the Tosks had formed a resistance movement of their own, known as the Balli Kombetar, or National Union, which took the field against the Italians at the end of 1942. It was chiefly recruited from the landowners and their peasant following and from that part of the youth of the towns which had not joined the L.N.C. The policy of the Balli Kombetar was Republican, Liberal, and strongly Nationalist; and among its leaders were such men as Midhat Frasheri and Ali Klissura, who had been prominent opponents of King Zog. Until the end of 1942 the Ballist leaders had formed what might be described as the constitu-

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*669 665 tional opposition to the Italians, accepting the ~~accomplished~~ fact of Italian rule, but continuing to demand the return of Albanian independence. For ideological reasons they inclined towards the Western Democracies, but their enthusiasm for the Allied cause was severely restrained, both by hatred of Communism and by fears that an Allied victory might once again deprive them of the Kossovo, as well as of their southern provinces. In taking up arms, therefore, against the Italians, their generous resolve to liberate Albania was perhaps seconded by their desire to win the political support of the Allies and to prove to their own people that they were no less patriotic than the Communists.

Thus, by the end of 1942, there were two distinct resistance movements, the Communist-directed L.N.C., which comprised, without combining, Abas Kupi's group, and the conservative Balli Kombetar. It is doubtful whether at this time their total effectives exceeded six thousand men; and their operations still caused their enemies little more than spasmodic annoyance. Nevertheless, they formed a rallying point for discontented elements of every kind; and the Italians justly feared that, in a country where the carrying of arms was so general, their activities might suddenly assume alarming proportions. In the spring of 1943, therefore, the Italian High Command decided to bring the strength of their army of occupation up to five and a half divisions; a proportion of one Italian soldier to every three Albanians of military age.

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*669 648 It was at this stage in the growth of the resistance movement that Maclean and Smiley had crossed the border into Albania. At first Partisans and Ballists had alike regarded them with undisguised suspicion; but each in turn soon recognised that a British Mission might bring them powerful moral and material support; and they began to compete with one another for the favour of the British officers.

Maclean found the Partisan forces predominantly composed

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*669 the territories which they had thus brought under their control, the Partisans rewarded their supporters, punished their enemies, and laid down the rudiments of a Communist administration which soon began to organise the civilian population in support of the revolution. Meanwhile the Ballist leaders began, first surreptitiously and then more openly, to visit their friends in the Tirana Government and to seek their help to defend Albania [727] from Communism. The Germans were quick to seize this opportunity of diverting Albanian energies into internecine channels; they forgot the Ballist raids on their convoys; and accordingly made sufficient arms available through the Tirana Government to re-equip the Ballist bands and send them back into the mountains as counter-guerillas. The civil war in Southern Albania was thus indefinitely prolonged, to the exhaustion of the Albanians and the repose of the German army.

*669 By driving the Ballists into the arms of the Tirana Govern-665 ment, and so of the Germans, Enver Hoja succeeded in branding them as "collaborationists". At the same time, this deliberate political manœuvre revealed his social revolutionary intentions and alarmed Abas Kupi and the chief men among the Ghegs. Abas Kupi indeed had been the architect of the policy of alliance with the Balli Kombetar and, at Mukai, had entered into formal obligations towards them on behalf of the L.N.C. He therefore regarded Enver Hoja's change of front as a personal betrayal and came increasingly to suspect that his Communist colleagues meant to attack him, just as they had attacked the Ballists, unless he submitted to full Communist control. Accordingly, when his entreaties and rebukes had alike failed to persuade Enver Hoja to abandon the civil war, he determined to separate himself from a movement whose leaders he could not trust and already feared. He therefore set about consolidating his faction in Mati, Kruya, and Tirana, and took soundings among the leading Albanians who were known to favour a restoration of the monarchy. Then, in December 1943, at a congress held in the village of Herri in the mountains north of Tirana, he proclaimed the formation of the Zogist movement. True to his ideas of a United Front, he at once

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offered an alliance to the L.N.C.; but they refused to recognise the Zogists;[1] and from this time his relations with Enver Hoja steadily deteriorated. A clash was feared; but a few weeks later a German punitive expedition drove the main body of the Partisans back across the Shkumbi; and geographical separation imposed an uneasy truce on both sides.

Meanwhile Gani, Said, and Hassan Kryeziu had returned to the Jakova mountains. With the other prisoners at Ventotteno they had been transferred to a camp on the mainland in the summer of 1943, following rumours of an Allied descent on the island, and had escaped to Rome in the confusion that followed the announcement of the armistice. There they had found Mehmet Bey Konitza, an Albanian of distinction, whose advice the Germans had sought in deciding which Albanian internees might safely be allowed to return to their homes. Mehmet Bey was an old friend of the Kryeziu family and had surreptitiously entered their names upon his list, thus procuring for them the necessary travel permits. With these they had returned to Jakova and, after spending one night in their family home, had taken to the mountains with a bodyguard of a hundred men.

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By the autumn of 1943 the number of British Missions operating in Albania had become so considerable that it was decided to recall Maclean to report and to send in a more senior officer, Brigadier Davies, to take command. Accordingly, in November, Maclean and Smiley were evacuated by Motor Torpedo-Boat from the neighbourhood of Valona,[2] and, after preparing in Cairo the first detailed report to be received on the Albanian situation, were sent to London to acquaint the Foreign Secretary and other interested parties with their experiences and opinions.

[1] Also known as the "Legality" movement, after the name which Zog had given to his party in the revolution of 1924.

[2] By a curious coincidence the boat which evacuated Maclean and Smiley brought in my former colleague, Sandy Glen, who was to spend some weeks reconnoitring the South Albanian coast for the Admiralty.

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*669 648 in 1940 and asked the Agha to tell me of his experiences in the years between. I wanted to hear the story for its own sake, and thought besides that his interpretation of the past would afford the most natural explanation of his present outlook. He smiled and began the detailed narrative of his adventures, enlivened by occasional flashes of sardonic humour, but unadorned except for matter-of-fact accounts of his own feelings at the time. He spoke in a low voice, prodding the glowing embers on the hearth as he talked, and looking up every now and then to see if the point of his sentence had reached me through the interpreter. It was near midnight before he had done; but it was a good story, and through it shone the consistency of the man and the skill with which he had preserved his independence from all those who had sought to use him for their own ends. Of these we were but the latest; and, next day, in a brief message to Maclean, I wrote: "Here is a fish whom many have hooked but none have ever landed".

● [665] We continued our talks in the morning and discussed the structure and policy of the Zogist movement. Its main fighting strength was drawn from the regions of Mati, Kruya, and Tirana, each of which had some special connection with the royalist cause. Zog was a man of Mati, and in his reign the valley had grown rich above all other districts in Albania. Tirana had been his chosen capital, whose claims he had consistently defended against the rival cities of Scutari and Valona. As for Kruya, it was Abas Kupi's birthplace, and he had governed it for fifteen years under the King. The Agha claimed that the clans in these three districts might muster ten thousand men; but they were ill-equipped and desperately short of ammunition. The movement, however, was spreading beyond Central Albania and already commanded the support of a number of former army and gendarmerie officers, the bulk of the Tirana merchants as well as certain Gheg chieftains and prominent Tosks. I was given the list of the members of the Central Committee and recognised the names of several well-known men, mostly landowners or intellectuals, but with a good record of opposition against the Italians.

The Agha's immediate aim was to build up alliances with

1/1 [i.e. Abas Kupi, leader of Zogist movement--Analyst]

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000 two " supply drops " from Italy, consisting of medical supplies, tinned rations, overcoats, sleeping-bags, and, most precious of all, our mail, with copies of the weekly newspapers and back numbers of *The Times*. No military stores had been dropped, since the Zogists were not yet fighting, but there were enough uniforms and rifles to equip our bodyguards, as well as a selection of pistols and submachine-guns which might serve as gifts to the guerilla leaders.

I slept late next morning and was aroused by Baptista, one of the Italian orderlies, lustily singing *Sole Mio* just outside my tent. The sun was indeed shining, and the cheerful fellow, seeing me wake, ran off towards the cookhouse and presently returned with a steaming plate of bacon and eggs — an unaccustomed luxury, for it was nearly three weeks since I had tasted breakfast. An hour or so later I climbed to the crest of the ridge above the camp and there sat down on a ledge in the shade of a clump of pines. It was now time to reflect on the lessons of our journey with Abas Kupi and to knit them together into a report for our Headquarters.

*669 665 Our progress through Mati and Kruya had lasted eighteen days ; in that time we had met Zogists of every condition, and had conferred at length with the local chieftains, officers, and politicians who were the leaders of the movement. Our first problem had been to assess the fighting strength of the Zogists : a baffling task, for guerilla armies are born of the changing moods of a people, and not even Abas Kupi knew for certain how many men would rally to his call. By dint, however, of reckoning up the rifle power of the separate clans which supported him, and by checking and cross-checking estimates of the forces engaged in the fighting of the previous autumn, we concluded that Abas Kupi could raise at least five thousand rifles at short call. Such a force might increase two- or three-fold if fortune and the Allies favoured the Monarchist cause ; but, though success would quickly swell the numbers of the Zogists, they would not long endure defeat, losses, or reprisals. Rifles there were enough, for every male over the age of fifteen went armed, but ammunition was short, and the supply of mortars and automatic weapons negligible.

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Starting from this estimate of their military potential we had next to decide whether the Zogists could again be made to fight. Abas Kupi, we believed, wanted war; for he needed British backing and was prepared to pay the price. Till now, however, he had been held back by the danger of a Partisan attack, the opposition of his political advisors, and the fear of reprisals and poverty of weapons which paralysed the clans. Arms we could supply once fighting had begun, and money enough to compensate for reprisals; but to reconcile Zogists and Partisans, and to convert the Zogist Committee to our way of thinking were thornier problems. Abas Kupi knew that to remain neutral as between Germans and Partisans was to court isolation and to risk falling between two stools. Originally, when the Axis Powers had been supreme, he had worked with the Communists against the Italians; later, as the Axis star declined, he had hoped to use the Germans to destroy the Communists. We had now convinced him that such a course would fatally compromise his relations with us; and, since in the last analysis the fate of the Monarchist cause would depend on our support, he was once more prepared to join hands with the Communists against the Germans. Whether they would prove equally amenable seemed uncertain, but we had at least brought the Agha to agree to negotiations; and it was now up to our Headquarters and to our colleagues with the L.N.C. to do their part. Their task would doubtless be easier if Abas Kupi attacked the Germans; but here we entered on a vicious circle, for it was to a large extent his fear of the Partisans which inhibited him from taking the field.

But the chief obstacle to action, and the root cause of the defeatism of Abas Kupi's political advisers, was their mistrust of British policy. They suspected that we had already assigned Albania to the Russian zone of influence, and regarded such a prospect not as liberation but as a change of masters. They had therefore demanded political assurances from us, as a test of our intentions; and, by refusing to commit ourselves, we had only seemed to confirm their worst suspicions. We had feared for a time that our negotiations must end in deadlock, but Abas Kupi's alternative request for private instructions from

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found a Gheg leader who was at war with the enemy. Nor was this all; for, although he declined to join their movement, Gani was on excellent terms with the Partisans.

The Kryeziu brothers had been living as outlaws in the Jakova mountains since their escape from Italy. They had mobilised a small force, and, some months before, had begun stirring up disaffection among the neighbouring tribes and in the Kossovo. Their activities had presently alarmed the Germans, who had sent out a punitive expedition to suppress them. Guided by a blood enemy of the Kryezius, the Germans had surrounded Gani in his hide-out, and, but for the providential approach of night, must have destroyed him. As it was, he had shot his way out into the darkness, killing seven of the enemy for the loss of two of his own men. Since then Gani had twice attacked German patrols sent into the region and had driven them off with losses.

Besides Gani's men there were also a few Partisans in the Jakova mountains belonging to the so-called "Kosmet" (Kossovo Metohia) group and in close touch with Marshal Tito. They had often pressed Gani to join their movement, but he had always refused, knowing that it was completely Communist controlled. At the same time he regarded them as allies in the common struggle against the Germans and had used his influence with the mountaineers to obtain protection and hospitality for them. This had been no easy task, for Kossovar opinion regarded the Partisans with unconcealed hostility as agents of Slavdom.

Said Kryeziu's companion was a certain Lazar Fundo, a Vlach from Korcha, who worked as Gani's chief propagandist and political adviser. Fundo was a man of fine and sensitive features, then in his forties, and combined great personal gentleness with an utterly ruthless intellect; a peculiar blend often to be observed among those who have received their early training in the ranks of the Communist Party or the militant orders of the Roman Church. Fundo had indeed been a Communist, and had served the Party for nearly fifteen years, both at the Comintern headquarters in Moscow and on missions in Europe and Asia. But the prestige which

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665 he enjoyed among the Party leaders had only served to excite the jealousy of Seifullah Maleshova, then the only other Albanian Communist. National character proved stronger than ideology ; and Maleshova had pursued his rival with all the implacable determination of a mountain blood feud. For years he had bided his time, but in 1938, during the Moscow trials, had denounced Fundo as a Right-Wing Deviationist and fellow conspirator of Bukharin. Fundo had been in Paris at the time, working among the Balkan exiles, and had obeyed the summons to return to Moscow with a clear conscience. There he had been tried before a Party Court, but the charges against him had been dismissed, thanks to the intervention of George Dimitroff, who was his personal friend. A few weeks later his passport had been returned to him and he had been ordered to go back to Paris to complete his mission. But meanwhile he had undergone an unpredictable change of heart. He had arrived in Moscow an orthodox Stalinist, prepared to justify the " purges " which were then at their height : he left the Soviet capital convinced that thousands of honest Communists were being done to death solely to make way for the unlimited dictatorship of Stalin and his faction. He had himself been spared, thanks to the favour he enjoyed in high places ; but the experience had converted him to those very deviationary tendencies of which he had falsely been accused. Back in Paris he openly advocated the reintroduction of democracy into the constitution of the Party and began to consort with the Trotskyist and Bukharinist exiles. His lapse from orthodoxy was soon known to Maleshova ; he was again denounced, and again invited to return to Moscow. This time, however, he prudently declined.

Disillusioned with Communism, Fundo had turned to Social-Democracy, and in 1938 had gone back to Albania, planning to found an Albanian Socialist Party. The Italians, however, had arrested him in the summer of 1939, and had sent him to the concentration camp at Ventotteno. There he had later been joined by the Kryeziu brothers, and the three had soon become fast friends. They had escaped together with the collapse of Italy, and Fundo had followed Gani

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back to Jakova as his political adviser. There he had prepared some brilliant leaflets for distribution in the Kossovo and had been a great influence for good in the Kryeziu's camp. To us he seemed a valuable ally; for in a dark and confused world he looked to the British Commonwealth as the least defective of human institutions.

We had several talks with Fundo and he told us something of his experiences as an official of the Comintern. Among other duties he had once been responsible for briefing Tito, then one of the senior European agents of the Communist Party. He told us that in those days Tito was considered in Moscow as one of their bravest and most loyal workers, endowed with great strength of character and the gift of leadership. His intellectual qualities, however, were not rated so high, and whenever he was sent on a difficult mission the Comintern provided him with one or more companions to guide his energies and make sure that he followed the "party line". Unfortunately for our Missions in Yugoslavia Fundo was no longer in a position to tell us who were now the brains behind the Marshal.

Gani had appointed the 5th of June for our meeting, and we therefore set out from Vlahn, accompanied by Muharrem Bairaktar, Said, Fundo, and Mehmet Ali, our host. We travelled by night, for our bodyguard was now nearly a hundred strong and we wanted to keep our movements secret from the Germans, at least until our talks with Gani were over. Our way led through fields and woods across a broad plain, watered by tributary streams of the Drin. The level going seemed strange after long weeks of climbing in the mountains; and, in the night, the stunted trees wreathed in waves of ground mist gave me the impression of riding along the bed of the sea. Just before the dawn it grew very cold; then, as the sun rose, we left the plain and followed a path into the forest of Bitutch. There we presently came upon a small detachment of Gani's men, posted to guard the approaches to his camp. They recognised Said, and brought us to the clearing where Gani was encamped. We embraced each other, glad that our paths

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669* [665]

Ihsan drove Nureddin back to Tirana in the afternoon and returned for dinner, bringing with him Midhat Bey Frasheri, the President of the Balli Kombetar. Midhat Bey had been in turn an official of the Sublime Porte, a member of the Committee of Union and Progress, and a powerful influence in the early struggles of the Albanian state. He had retired from public life under the monarchy, for he was a strong Republican, and since then had eked out his living from the proceeds of a bookshop. Steeped in the cultures of Europe and of the Near East, he was a man of austere ways, a romantic conservative, possessed of burning patriotism and a Catonian faith in the virtues of aristocracy. Now over seventy years old, he was a spare, straight figure, with determined yet sensitive features and a skin like parchment. On first acquaintance he seemed inordinately shy and was afflicted with a slight stutter. He was gifted, however, with a dry but sparkling wit, and his talk at dinner that night assured our entertainment and compelled our admiration.

When the meal was over we turned to grimmer topics. We bluntly accused the Balli Kombetar of "collaborating" with the Germans and threatened to denounce the movement and its leaders as enemies of the Allies unless they at once abandoned their fight against the Partisans. Midhat Bey was too honest to dissemble and answered that it was now too late. A revolution was in progress in South Albania in which the Communists, organised in the L.N.C., sought to overthrow the existing social order defended by the Balli Kombetar. Both movements had their origin in the resistance to the Italians, and at Mukai, in 1943, had concluded an alliance for joint operations against the Axis armies. The Ballists had been loyal to the alliance; but, after the Italian capitulation, Enver Hoja had attacked them, so that he should not have to share with rivals the prize of political power. This civil war had no connection with the struggle for National Liberation, which both parties had at first continued to prosecute. The Partisans, however, had shown themselves reckless of the cost of war to the civilian population and strong in the arms they received from the British. They had pressed hard upon the Ballists; and the

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arouse the suspicion or the greed of the combatants; and it is only a question of chance whether they are shot as spies, murdered for their property, or killed by a stray bullet. In time of revolution, " He that is not with me is against me ".

Next day we enjoyed the comforts of Ihsan's house and expounded our inflexible opposition to an anti-Communist front to various lesser politicians who came out from Tirana to meet us. The rest of the time we spent in discussions with Ihsan and his cousin, Liqa, who was renowned as a hunter. Ihsan disapproved of blood sports but, since the *chasse à l'homme* was a frequent feature of Albanian country life, he kept two machine-guns, a mortar, and a stock of hand-grenades in his gun-room as a matter of course. In the house he carried only a light automatic, but when he drove to Tirana, or went for a walk, he armed himself with a Mäuser parabellum. Such precautions seemed incongruous in so civilised a man; but, if blood feuds were less common in the plain than in the mountains, the preventive assassination of opponents was a time-honoured method of government. It was interesting, indeed, to see how centuries of despotic rule had engrained the habits of conspiracy in the life of an Albanian country gentleman. One evening at dinner I heard what I thought was an owl hooting in the garden.

" It must be my cousin Liqa," said Ihsan, going to the French windows, " it is his call."

Sure enough it was.

We left Ihsan[1] by night and set out towards our base, stopping in the mountains above Tirana to meet Jemal Herri. Jemal had once been chief of Zog's secret police; and, along with Muharrem Bairaktar, Prenk Previsi, and Fikri Dine, had formed the quadrumvirate by whose efforts the royal regime had been established. Like his colleagues, he had fallen from favour, but had followed Zog into exile in 1939, returning to Albania in 1941 with Oakley-Hill and the forces of the United Front. Now he stood second to Abas Kupi in the Zogist movement and had built up a small but efficient force of his own,

[1] [i.e. Ihsan Toptani. Cf. cat. 116, p. 185 — Analyst]

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665 [625] stiffened by a handful of German deserters and fugitives from the labour gangs of the Todt Organisation. We had not previously met Jemal, for his relations with Abas Kupi were strained, and he had for some time been sulking in his tent. We knew, however, that he was in daily contact with Tirana and were anxious to enlist his support in disrupting the political manœuvres of the Germans.

[622] He[1] entertained us to lunch in the house of a village *hoja* and supplemented the usual hospitality of the mountains with highly spiced Yugoslav dishes specially prepared for us by his Bosnian mistress. In appearance he was a cross between Mussolini and Mephistopheles, with a powerful cast of face, ruthless yet somehow mask-like, malicious, and smooth. His violent temperament was curbed by iron self-control and disguised by an elaborate courtesy which might have seemed unctuous but for a hint of arrogance. In conversation he damned Abas Kupi with faint praise, seeking to drive a wedge between us and suggesting that we should send him supplies as an independent leader. We turned a guarded answer, but prevailed on him to send an urgent message to Fikri Dine, advising him to decline Neubacher's invitation to form a government.

000 In the afternoon Hare left for Shupal to persuade Abas Kupi to send a similar warning to Fikri. Meanwhile Maclean and I pressed across the valley and reached Bastar about midnight, only to find that Smiley had moved the camp. We therefore rode out along the range and, at 2 A.M., came on the new base, situated by the side of a gurgling stream on the edge of a broad, level clearing in the forest. We roused Smiley from his slumbers and when at last the flow of his curses had subsided he told us that he had good news: Headquarters had telegraphed approving the terms of our agreement with Abas Kupi. Now at last the revolt might begin.

5

61 648 NEXT morning, the last of June, we reviewed our situation and judged it satisfactory. Headquarters had already ratified

[1] [i.e. Jemal Herri, former chief of Zogist secret police--Analyst]

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to attack the Germans. Meanwhile, leaving Maclean and myself at Topise, Smiley set out with Zogist guides to reconnoitre the approaches to Durazzo.

That night, when we had gone, Fikri Dine, General Prenk Previsi, and representatives of the Balli Kombetar drove out from Tirana to the Agha's headquarters to learn of our reply. Their discussions lasted through the night, but before dawn the die was cast. They returned to the capital, and, at noon on the 29th August, Fikri Dine announced the resignation of his government in a proclamation which declared that his efforts to save Albania from Communism had been frustrated by the total absence of German support.

The resignation of the government was the signal for the political leaders to disperse, and completed the isolation of the Germans. They sought to persuade, and at length to compel, the loyalty of their former associates, but when they struck the birds had already flown. Fikri Dine made his way to Dibra, hoping to raise the tribes to his support, but the Partisans were already masters of the region, and the chiefs who had been his friends had gone over to the winning side. For some days he wandered as an outlaw through the lands he had once swayed; but his utmost efforts only rallied to his cause some two hundred men, the remnants of the Dibran gendarmerie. With these he then retired through Mirdita to the Catholic region of Kurbenesh, which lies to the west of Mati. Kurbenesh was the seat of Prenk Previsi's influence, and there Fikri found the general with a body of picked officers and men of the Albanian army. Their combined following was less than five hundred strong — all that remained of the Albanian armed forces.

The Ballist leaders meanwhile hesitated to entrust themselves to the Gheg chieftains and went into hiding near, or even in, Tirana, to wait until their forces should arrive from the South. Midhat Frasheri and Ali Klissura were variously reported held or shot by the Germans, but when the smoke of rumour cleared it was found that they were in Shiyak. There Abas Ermenye, the movement's energetic military commander, was concentrating the remnants of the Ballist forces, which presently amounted to some eight hundred men.

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*669 unless we were withdrawn from Albania within five days, patrols would be sent out to capture us and bring us to trial before a Partisan court-martial.

That Enver Hoja should thus have dared to impugn the good faith of British officers, let alone to threaten their arrest and trial, is eloquent of the hostility, or at least the contempt which he felt for the British authorities. He had rashly chosen, however, to deliver his ultimatum at a time when his delegates in Bari were negotiating an agreement with the British Command. The terms which they had obtained were unexpectedly favourable, but our outraged staff officers now broke off discussions, declaring that they would not ratify the agreement until Enver Hoja had withdrawn his allegations and his ultimatum. For some days relations between the Partisan Government and our Headquarters were strained, but our staff officers remained unyielding, and at last Enver Hoja climbed down and gave reluctant assurances for the honourable treatment of all British officers in Albania. The incident was thus closed to the satisfaction of our Headquarters, but, despite Enver Hoja's apparent submission, the real victory was to the Partisans. They had succeeded in creating the impression in Bari that support of the Zogists must involve further " unpleasantness "; and once our Headquarters had ratified the agreement with them the fear of " unpleasantness " became a powerful cause of appeasement.

• 665 829 Politics is not yet an exact science, and many of our staff officers still clung to the hope that Enver Hoja's intransigence would be moderated by opposition from within the L.N.C. In the last week of August, however, Mustafa Jinishi, Enver Hoja's only serious rival, was killed in an ambush in Dibra. Mustafa had been a Communist, but had suffered from a peculiarly Albanian brand of deviation. He had subscribed to the doctrine that the ruling classes must be dispossessed of the ownership of the means of production, but had believed that this principle could hardly be applied to the tribal society of the Ghegs. There the means of production were already owned in common by the tribe, and the authority of the chiefs

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was derived not from ownership, but rather from personal qualities, tradition, or subsidies received from abroad. Mustafa had therefore considered that education, health, and administration were the chief requirements of a community whose economic structure was not of itself an obstacle to the Revolution. These theoretical conclusions had suggested a policy of gradualism, and in this he had beenfortified by more practical considerations. The strength of Albania lay in the mountains; and Mustafa knew that, even if the Partisans occupied Tirana, they could only compel the submission of the tribes with the help of foreign troops. His patriotic instinct recoiled from such an expedient; and he considered, besides, that a population of only a million could ill afford the employment of violent means to attain an end which a Marxist interpretation of history showed to be in any case inevitable. He had therefore concluded that the Albanian Communist Party must persuade where it could not profitably compel, and had thus envisaged a period of prolonged co-operation with the Nationalist chiefs.

The study of the divergences of opinion within the Communist Party, as within the Early Church, is more amusing than instructive; and Mustafa Jinishi's position is perhaps best described by saying that, while he had regarded the United Front as a strategy, Enver Hoja thought of it only as tactics. In infinity the two are indistinguishable, but here below the difference is a fruitful source of controversy. Already in Belgrade Mustafa had advocated Communist collaboration with Abas Kupi and Gani Kryeziu. Later, as a member of the Central Council of the L.N.C., he had played a prominent part in winning non-Communist support for the Partisan cause. In the early days Enver Hoja had welcomed his efforts for tactical reasons, and it was not until the time of the Italian armistice that the breach between them had become open. Then, at Abas Kupi's instance, Mustafa had concluded the agreement at Mukai for a military alliance with the Ballists; but Enver Hoja had branded the agreement as Right Wing deviation, and had persuaded the Central Council to withhold its ratification. Thereafter Mustafa's influence in the movement had declined, and, alone of the members of the

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665 Central Council, he had not been given office when the Partisan Provisional Government had been formed at the end of May 1944. Instead, he had been sent as the Government's delegate to the Northern Army, where his efforts to reconcile the Nationalist leaders might still serve Enver Hoja's ends. It had indeed been largely as a result of Mustafa's patient diplomacy that Tsen Elezi, Dan Kalloshi, and other Dibran notables came over to the Partisans; and the cordial relations which he had established with Muharrem Bairaktar had encouraged the Nationalists to believe that he was still working for an understanding with them. It is probable that he was; and indeed almost his last action had been to prepare for a meeting with Gani Kryeziu, his friend and protector in Belgrade.

627 Mystery still surrounds Mustafa's death.[1] The fatal ambush occurred some distance from the front; and, though he had with him several guards, no one ever saw his assailants or heard of them thereafter. Dibra is the land of ambushes, but many still believe that Mustafa was done to death on Enver Hoja's orders. Certain, is only that his work perished with him, and that, after his death, the Partisans no longer sought to reach an understanding with any of the Gheg chiefs.

We were sitting with Abas Kupi and Said when a courier brought the news of Mustafa's fate. Said wept, and the Agha said to us sadly:

"He was my friend, and a great patriot."

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667 AFTER Abas Kupi had told us of his decision to attack Durazzo, Maclean and I had returned with Ihsan to his farm at Topise. There we had tested and cleaned our weapons, destroyed superfluous documents, and sought to reduce the weight and bulk of our baggage. Whatever was left over was now confided to the Italian contingent of our Mission, who were constituted into a rear headquarters, despite the protest of their two officers who wanted to fight at our side. Having thus prepared ourselves for the battle, we drove with Ihsan to Luz, near the

[1] [Mustafa Jminshi, rival of Enver Hoja -- Analyst]

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might be the will of the people, the interests of the leaders worked irresistibly for civil war. That night hopes had been high, but in the morning they were shattered by a despatch from the Zogist headquarters. The Agha had indeed attacked and wiped out a German patrol, but this had been only an incident in the day's fighting. The real battle had been between Zogists and Partisans; and, while they had rent one another, the Germans had watched, and must have smiled, from the ramparts of the citadel. The struggle had been long and bitter, but in the end the Partisans had prevailed. Kruya was lost to the Zogists; and, under cover of night, the Agha had withdrawn his forces across the plain from the last of his strongholds.

While the battle still raged around Kruya we were joined in Mazjhe by Midhat Frasheri and Abas Ermenye, the military commander of the Balli Kombetar. Midhat came on a mule; Abas Ermenye rode a coal-black charger, and, in his blue-green uniform and flat, old-fashioned *képi*, looked like a hero from the Carlist wars. Nor was his romantic appearance belied by his conversation, for he quoted freely from the poems of André Chenier and the speeches of the French revolutionary heroes. He was tall and dark, with sensitive features, but there was something pedantic about his manner; and he seemed always to be worrying about himself. He was a young professor, fired with nationalist sentiment, and fascinated by the glamour of arms. Already, when a colleague of Enver Hoja's at the *Lycée* at Korcha, Abas Ermenye had sought to organise his students to resist the Italian invasion. He had fled to Greece rather than endure foreign rule, and there, in 1940, had vainly sought to raise a force of Albanian *émigrés* to fight alongside the Greek armies. With the fall of Athens he had been captured by the Italians, and had been sent to the concentration camp at Ventotteno, where he had remained nearly two years. In 1942, however, he had been allowed to return to Albania, and, a few months later, had taken to the mountains to organise the Ballist forces in the region of Korcha. Maclean had worked with him against the Italians in 1943,

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and thought him the ablest of the Ballist military leaders; and indeed of those warriors who, like Skender Mucho, Safet Butka, and Husni Lepenitsa, had once been household names among the Tosks, he was now the sole survivor. At heart a reformer, Abas Ermenye sought in the field an escape from the imbroglio of Ballist politics. He knew only that he fought against Communism, and, perhaps just because he doubted whether the Balli Kombetar any longer offered a real alternative, he spared neither himself nor his men.

Midhat and Abas Ermenye had come as political and military delegates of the Balli Kombetar to inform us officially that their whole Central Committee was now in the mountains, and that they had decided to begin operations next day. Abas Ermenye planned to open the campaign with an ambush on the Tirana-Scutari road, and asked that we should send a British officer to watch the conduct of his men and to certify the results of the action. We agreed at once to this request, and Merret was chosen as our liaison officer with the forces of the Balli Kombetar. On the following evening Abas Ermenye duly laid his ambush, and, with a force of two hundred men, surprised a German convoy of forty trucks. Merret afterwards reported that three trucks were burnt, eighteen looted and damaged, eight motor cycles destroyed, and more than thirty Germans killed.

As further evidence of their good-will the Ballist leaders also sent us one Staff-Sergeant Schumacher of the U.S. Air Force, whose 'plane had been shot down to the south of Durazzo in the previous November. After wandering for two days among the coastal lagoons, Schumacher had been rescued by the Ballists, and for nearly a year had been cared for and hidden from the Germans on a farm belonging to Nureddin Vlora. We already had with us another U.S. airman, Sergeant Corsentino, rescued by the Zogists, and the two were to prove a most valuable addition to our Mission, helping in ambushes, road watching, and the drudgery of cipher traffic.

On the 10th September, after an abortive attempt against a bridge, we moved to Preza, where the Zogists and Ballists

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000 son had been killed in the R.A.F. raid on Petch. The tradition of hospitality, however, proved stronger than a father's resentment; he feasted us on sucking pig and grapes, and placed his house at our disposal. There, in the evening, we were joined 643 by Abas Kupi, who came with Fikri Dine and the leaders of the Balli Kombetar.

Fikri was stocky and dark, with grey, rather lifeless eyes and a greedy mouth. He looked tough; his speech was blunt; his manner arrogant. He was not, however, without subtlety, and we found him possessed of a distinct sense of humour. The first encounter with British officers must have been embarrassing, for a former " collaborationist " premier, but, to our great relief, Fikri sought neither to explain nor to excuse his conduct. Instead he told us the history of his attempts to procure arms and money from the Germans, and, with disarming frankness and a touch of irony, described the causes of his failure. He had tried to exploit them for his own ends, and his only regret was that his intrigues had been foiled. There is an element of exploitation in all politics, and Fikri's rage at being made himself the dupe was so sincere that it could not but compel a certain professional sympathy. When he had done with the past he questioned me anxiously about British policy towards Albania, and his own verdict was not perhaps mistaken.

"I know," he said, " that you English have an interest in our country because we have a sea coast and you are a sea power. Many of us count on that, but I have learnt from bitter experience that in politics little interests are often sacrificed to greater ones."

701 With Fikri came General Prenk Previsi, the Commander-in-Chief of the Albanian army and the paramount influence in Kurbenesh. He was a dark, rather weak-faced man, and wore a blue-green field uniform with red facings and highly polished riding-boots. We thought him a light-opera general, but as yet he took little part in proceedings and remained in the background, surrounded by a group of down-at-heel staff officers.

• 665 In Malibardhe we also met for the first time Ali Bey Klissura, who stood second only to Midhat Frasheri in the Balli Kombetar. A powerful landowner from the south, Ali

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had served in Fan Noli's government and had been condemned to death *in absentia* during Zog's regime for participating in a "Communist" conspiracy. He had spent fourteen years of his exile in France, and there had acquired a style of eloquence and point of view which savoured strongly of the Third Republic. In appearance indeed, with his florid complexion, untidy, greying hair and thick horn-rimmed spectacles, he might well have been a protagonist of the Radical Socialist Party.

Ali had returned to Albania when the Italians had driven out King Zog and had resumed his place among the Republican leaders. Later he had become one of the founders of the Balli Kombetar, and had fought with some success in the revolt against the Italians. As an ardent Liberal and Nationalist, however, he cordially detested Communism and was generally supposed to have played a leading part in organising the Ballist effort against the Partisans. Zog had condemned him to death as a Communist; Enver Hoja as a Fascist. The wheel of political fortune has strange turns, but in both cases Ali was absent at the trial.

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THE Zogist forces had been in action for a fortnight, and Abas Kupi waited with growing concern for the aeroplanes which should bring supplies from Italy. His war-chest was empty, his men were down to their last cartridge, but we knew now that the help which we had promised would never come. Now, just as we had brought the Agha and his confederates back into the struggle, our Headquarters ordered Maclean to return to Bari "to report". Smiley, with Sergeants Jenkins and Jones, our team of saboteurs, were to accompany him. I was to take over command of the Mission, but with express instructions not to urge Abas Kupi to attack the Germans, nor to hold out to him any hope of support if he should. My role was textually defined as that of "a neutral observer", although how a British officer attached to forces actively fighting the Germans could be "neutral" presented a

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Next day, the 19th September, the "Kosmet" forces departed in the direction of Gani's headquarters, but the 5th Brigade remained in Dobreit and presently surrounded the British Mission's base. Their commissar then came and curtly informed Simcox that he must follow him to the L.N.C. headquarters at Berat. Simcox objected that as a British officer he could only take orders from Maclean, or from Bari; but the commissar explained that Enver Hoja was no longer prepared to countenance the activities of British missions not accredited to the L.N.C. To solve the deadlock Simcox offered to refer the matter to Bari by wireless, but the commissar put an armed guard round the transmitter and disclosed his real intentions by declining to allow its operation. Enraged at such treatment, Simcox refused to move; but the Partisans pulled down his tent while he still sat inside it and, after pillaging his camp, forcibly marched him off towards the south. On the journey he was kept a close prisoner and was submitted to every indignity. His kit was looted; his papers were searched; and the Partisans deprived a British officer of his arms. Thus he was brought to Berat, where he was handed over to the British Mission and evacuated by sea to Bari.

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At the first halt on this march, Lazar Fundo was called before the commissar, and, on identification, was stripped, laid out on the ground and beaten to death. Fundo had resigned from the Communist Party in 1938; and his murder was officially explained by Enver Hoja as "execution for treason to the movement".

While the 5th Brigade was thus engaged, the leaders of the Kosmet forces came into Gani's headquarters and summoned him to join the L.N.C. or bear the consequences of a refusal. Gani declined their summons and ignored their threats; and the array of his troops admonished the Partisans of the danger of seeking to force his hand. They resorted therefore to guile, and, pleading their incompetence to negotiate, invited Said to come with them to meet Dali Ndreou, the Commander of the 1st L.N.C. Division, who was, they said, in the neighbourhood. Said imprudently accepted, and was lured a day's journey to the south in search of the elusive commander. That night he

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000 which we know the least; and much of what we think we know is rumor or conjecture.

Albanians are accustomed to having the world know little about their affairs, and are even accustomed to the rôle of satellite—though their national spirit, which exists in spite of the vivacity of their religious and tribal conflicts, forbids one from saying that they are reconciled to it. The last time I was in the country, a good many years ago, Italy and Jugoslavia were contending for predominance. Italy won, expelled King Zog and in 1939 annexed the country. Ciano has recorded the arrival in Rome of the sad-faced group of Albanians summoned to make obeisance to the Duce, lacking only the iron collars of the slaves that used to grace the old imperial triumphs. But after Mussolini was hung up by his heels and Tito was accepted as one of the Allied victors all this was rectified. The new
• 665 Albanian dictator, Enver Hoxha (pronounced Hodzha), was a
643 Communist guerrilla who had been in contact with the Jugoslav
648 Partisans during the war. Indeed, an emissary from Tito, Miladin Popovich, is credited with having organized the Albanian Communists into a unified party in November 1941. Hoxha was an original member, and Tito's influence over him, dating from that time, endured until the Cominform row broke the Communist world front in 1948. Though Hoxha was never Tito's creature to the extent that the successors to Zog had been Mussolini's, he looked to Jugoslavia from the start for almost everything in the way of practical relief, technical assistance and even funds. From Moscow he received, apart from a small military mission, only remote ideological control and the prestige of enjoying at second hand the patronage which Stalin accorded Tito.

000 While Jugoslavia herself was an obedient satellite this seemed to be satisfactory to Moscow. Soviet enthusiasm for what was being done in Albania was reflected in the Moscow press. Take, for example, this report published in *Trud* in April 1948 from a special correspondent who had just visited the country:

> In the Democratic Front, a political organization has been created that unites all the forces of the people. . . . Agrarian reform has been effected, putting an end to the feudal system of landownership. . . . Industrial enterprises, transportation, communications, etc., in the coun-

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Italian shipping centers, also Foggia, reputed to be a prospective bombing base for long-range American operations against the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the eastern and central Mediterranean basin and much of North Africa, more important than ever in the latest British and American strategy, would be within bombing radius of Jugoslav and Albanian airfields. Tito's withdrawal from the Soviet camp made it necessary to rely solely on Albanian bases for carrying these plans into execution. Without Saseno and the Albanian airfields (of which there were about ten by latest report, half of them developed to the point where they could serve heavy planes), Soviet submarines would be barred from the Mediterranean and Soviet bombers would be pushed back to the Danube valley. We of course have no direct information about the extent of recent Soviet activity on Saseno. However, foreign intelligence services in contact with underground elements inside Albania believe that although newspaper stories about elaborate concrete submarine pens are exaggerated the scale of fortifications makes Saseno a formidable threat to naval movements in the Mediterranean in time of war as well as to military installations in Italy and North Africa.

With such valuable eggs in its little Albanian basket,[1] the Kremlin naturally ordered Prime Minister Hoxha to show the utmost diligence in rooting out any dangerous nationalist sentiments that might appear in the Albanian Communist Party. There had been a nationalist movement of some promise in Albania during the war, but its leaders had lost standing for various reasons—some because they collaborated with the Communists, some because they collaborated with the Nazis when the latter replaced the Italians after the Italian capitulation, some because American and British propaganda tended to favor the Albanian Communists as a way of helping the Jugoslav Partisans, especially after the Allied landing in Italy made it seem possible that Churchill might succeed in having an Allied expedition sent into the Balkans. When Hoxha set up his government in Tirana in November 1944 he maintained the appearance of collaboration with such non-Communist resistance elements as still existed and were willing to join the new "Democratic Front," the organization which now replaced the openly Communist "National Liberation Front" of the war years. But the need for concessions to patriotic

[1] [i.e. Russian political and strategic interests, see cat. 116, pp. 228-229.—Analyst]

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nationalist and democratic forces in the country diminished as the Communist Party tightened its hold, and following the one-ticket elections of December 2, 1945, it came to an end. The monarchy was abolished in fact as well as in name, the People's Democratic Republic of Albania was proclaimed and the non-Communists who had been collaborating with Hoxha fled abroad or were shot. There followed the agrarian "reforms," the nationalization (confiscation) of such small industry as existed in the country, the elimination of independent shopkeepers and the other measures which so much pleased the Soviet commentator quoted earlier.

Among the strongest incentives to Albanian nationalistic feeling are Albania's claim to the Kossovo area in Jugoslavia, where there is an Albanian minority, and Greece's claim to the Northern Epirus district in southern Albania, where there is a Greek minority. Propaganda in favor of one annexation and counter-propaganda against the other are the habitual stock-in-trade of Albanian patriots.

Italy annexed Kossovo to Albania in 1941—one of Mussolini's cheap rewards for the Nazi victory in Jugoslavia. The action strengthened the Jugoslav resistance, notably on the part of the Serb Chetniks, for the Kossovo plain holds a special place in Serb history and in the hearts of Serb patriots. In the end the district went back to Jugoslavia, after the Italians and later the Germans had been expelled. One of the returns which Hoxha had to make for Tito's material and moral support was to put an end to the former annexationist propaganda in that direction.

Developments on the other front were more favorable to Hoxha. Britain always had been a friend and protector of Greece, from imperial interest as well as Byronic sentiment, and the United States had taken over a share in that rôle under the Truman Doctrine. Hoxha could point to the fact that the two Western Powers were hostile to the Greek Communists as well as to his own Communist régime, whereas the Soviet Union was friendly to both; and on this basis he could argue that if the Greek Royal Government won it would have British and perhaps American support in claiming Northern Epirus, whereas if the Greek Communists won they would be instructed by the Soviet Government to withdraw any claim on another Communist country's territory. On balance, Communism

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did not come out badly as a defender of Albanian interests, for the lands in jeopardy in the south constitute nearly a quarter of the entire territory of Albania and are much more important to the country's existence than the territory claimed from Jugoslavia. Recently, with Communist fortunes at a low ebb in Greece and with Jugoslav-Albanian relations as bad as possible, the situation has been reversed. Hoxha can still claim, however, that a Communist victory all around is the only guarantee of a safe solution of the quarrel with Greece, and he also is now free to attack the treatment received by the Albanians in Kossovo and to say that if only there were a "true" Communist régime in Belgrade it would do them favors which a "false" comrade like Tito refused.

Basically, however, Hoxha felt insecure, and not only for the reasons mentioned a few paragraphs back. He must constantly have wondered how he himself stood in the Kremlin. What was the Soviet estimate of his own fidelity? He had been Tito's friend, had protested countless times how much he loved him, how he would fight to the death for him. What could he do to demonstrate that he, Hoxha, who had gone back so easily on one ally, would remain faithful to the next?

Hoxha's second-in-command was Lieutenant General Koci Xoxe (pronounced Dzodze), Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, organizing secretary of the Communist Party, an able theoretician and adept also at ruthless action. Like Hoxha he had been Tito's close collaborator, but he had not hesitated a fraction of a second longer than his chief in announcing his switch to the anti-Tito camp, and he vied with Hoxha in denouncing their old ally's ideological errors and political perfidy and in lauding Stalin as the fount of Communist wisdom and the Soviet Union as Albania's only protector. During the summer of 1948 as Minister of the Interior he conducted the purge of Titoist suspects in the government and Party.

What more convincing proof of his own fidelity could Hoxha offer Stalin than to be willing to sacrifice even this outstanding friend and colleague? To denounce Xoxe would be almost like denouncing himself, but preferable. He called the Central Committee of the Party to meet in Berat in September, and after it had listened to his account of how Xoxe, who had been purging Titoists, was himself a

8: Armstrong 5-4 (no date) 1951 EF1 Yugoslavia
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Titoist, it voted that this was indeed so and that he in turn should be purged. Also implicated were Pandi Christo, former President of the Control Commission, Nosti Kerentyi, former President of the State Planning Commission, both like Xoxe members of the Politburo, and more than a dozen other influential officials and party members. As a first step, Xoxe was removed from his key post and nominated as Minister of Industry. Moscow-chosen and Moscow-trained Major-General Mehmet Shehu helped Hoxha direct this manœuvre and succeeded Xoxe as the Number 2 man of the régime. Xoxe's new post was announced by the Albanian radio October 2, 1948. Before the month was up he had been deprived of it, expelled from the Party and arrested with Christo and the others as "agents of Trotskyite Jugoslav agents." He was convicted as "chief bandit" of "the Trotskyite group of enemies of the people," [5] and shot on June 11, 1949.

Hoxha may have had other motives besides a desire to offer Stalin the most dramatic burnt-offering possible as proof of his own zeal and fidelity. He may have seized on the chance to get rid of his nearest rival. Nor must we rule out the possibility that Communists sometimes act for the reasons they allege. Hoxha may have told the truth about Xoxe. The Minister of the Interior may have purged a few minor Titoists in order to cover up the fact that he had left more important ones at large, and that with them he was plotting to take Albania into the anti-Cominform camp at the first opportunity.

A writer in the *New Times* of Moscow has given us a summary of Soviet opinion of Xoxe:

> Koci Xoxe was a shifty little man who combined the brutality of a wolf with the cowardice of a jackal. He wormed his way into the Ministry of the Interior and the Central Committee of the Party. He flooded the country with sleuths of Tito, helped the latter to organize the economic invasion of Albania, violated the foreign trade monopoly and the sovereign rights of the Republic. Tito speculators made their way into the country and plundered Albania's commodity reserves, buying up with devaluated dinars cattle, grain, olive oil, fruit, wool, wine, tobacco, as well as valuable handicraft ware, the work of Albanian peasants. The goods were shipped by truck and boat to Jugoslavia, and

[5] Tirana radio, home service transmission, June 10, 1949.

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any political intriguers against the present régime who may be found within its territory. 681

2. If, after the conclusion of this covenant, one man kills another with or without just cause, his family shall be punished by the people of Mat with banishment from Mat for three years and his property, both movable and immovable, shall be confiscated and become state property. [672]

3. The same penalties shall be imposed on any man who runs off with a betrothed girl or a married woman.

4. When a domestic animal has been stolen and the thief cannot be found, the village to which the tracks lead must either pay the animal's value or prove that the tracks lead away from its land.

5. Whoever aids criminals and gives them food and shelter renders himself liable to the penalties detailed in clause 2.[1]

6. Whoever carries arms of any description without declaring them renders himself liable to the death penalty.

7. Whoever spreads false rumours about the policy of the State, public security or public finances to the detriment of the present régime and its policy shall be punished as laid down by the Lieutenant-General's decree No. 185.[2]

8. The people's representatives are to regulate and to examine all complaints which may be made concerning land, irrigation, water, roads and forests and if a commission succeeds in settling a dispute between two persons, the decision of the commission shall be inviolable. If it is contested, the contestants shall take the matter to the proper court. [692]

9. Land in M[illegible] is generally held without regular title-deeds and ownership is proved by nothing but a written receipt (*senet*) and a meal according to the local custom. It appears that lately the ownership of properties bought 5, 10, 20 or 30 years ago with a receipt and a meal, as witnesses also confirm, is often disregarded or if regarded, is a constant source of disorders and murder. To put an end to such quarrelling the local Commission must not meddle with exchange of land so made until the Government has registered all the land according to the laws concerned. [423]

10. The chairman of the Commission shall be the local sub-prefect, and its members the political secretary of the sub-prefecture, the gendarmerie commander, the Fascist Albanian militia's commander, and the representatives of the people who assist in drawing up the present covenant. [624]

11. It is learned that Communists or, as some call them, Bolshevists, have made their appearance among us. We must get rid of these persons. 681 665

[1] (Author's note. At this time the term 'criminals' included not only transgressors of the law but also patriots resisting Italian rule.)

[2] (Author's note. No copy of this decree can be found.)

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[681] whether they be young or old, and must not let them exist within the [665] boundaries of the district of Mat. If there are any such persons, the people of Mat, together with the local authorities, must destroy them, not only with the rifle, but also with the fist. For no one can endure a person who is a traitor and has neither character nor morals. The entire people must disown such men and attack them with all its strength until it destroys them root and branch.

[642] 12. By statutory law the Albanian and the Italian peoples are brothers with the same mother and the same father. That is to say, the two peoples have the same father who is the King Emperor and the King of both Albania and Italy. So we shall destroy anyone who insults the King by talking against him and we shall punish the fellow as specified in clause 2.

13. This Covenant which we have made at a plenary meeting of the people of Mat is to remain valid until the end of the General War, and anyone who breaks it is to be considered a traitor to his country and to the régime, that is to say, a betrayer of his fatherland and the régime.

Sgd. Beqir Sitki Hasa
Chairman of Commission
Sub-Prefect of Mat.